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PARIS FOR WALLER, LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2016

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SUBJECT: SYRIA'S LABWANI APPEARS IN COURT, DEFENSE ASKS FOR
U.S. TESTIMONY

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4 b/d

¶1. (C) Syrian opposition activist Kamal Labwani appeared in court July 31, with the criminal court judge granting the defense team's request to play two televised interviews, including one with Al-Hurra, in an open court session, possibly as early as Labwani's next court appearance on August 23, according to lawyers. The judge also apparently backed off from his July 25 decision to allow lawyers to have a complete copy of the Labwani file, ruling that he would permit the photocopying of documents "as allowed under Syrian law." Defense lawyers said they were still unable to visit Labwani privately, with the judge saying that he had no jurisdiction to prevent "an officer" from attending those sessions. Attending Labwani's July 31 appearance were U.S., UK and Canadian diplomats, some Syrian human rights activists, and members of the extended Labwani family.

¶2. (C) After the session, one of Labwani's lawyers, Muhanned al-Hasani, asked whether U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor J.D. Crouch and the former U.S. Ambassador to Syria would be willing to prepare a sworn deposition on behalf of the Labwani defense, addressing key SARG allegations that Labwani had called for a U.S. invasion of Syria, as well as economic pressure on the country. (Note: Labwani is charged with having contact with a foreign power and encouraging the foreign power to invade Syria, which could carry the death sentence.)
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